

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**YEMEN'S FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM**

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## ABSTRACT

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This paper examines the relationship between the United States and Yemen in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Yemen supports the general goals and objectives of the United States in this effort and the Yemeni national leadership has launched an initiative to confront and fight terror and work towards ending it at the earliest opportunity. This initiative has included military and law enforcement cooperation with U.S. agencies. These efforts have resulted in the capture and prosecution of several terrorists, some of whom were involved in the bombing of the USS COLE. Although cooperation between Yemen and the United States has been positive - and will continue to be so - there are differences regarding the definition of terrorism and the perception of equal application of that definition to all states in the Middle East, including Israel, that must be addressed if a truly lasting solution to the problem of international terrorism is to be achieved. This paper will review the nature of these differences beginning with the definition of terrorism. Additionally, the nature of the Global Terrorist Threat will be reviewed as well as Yemen's strategic requirements for effectively supporting the United States in defeating that threat. The paper concludes with an assessment of the Yemen - United States relationship in the fight against terrorism and a series of policy recommendations for both Yemen and the United States, centering on informational, security and economic aspects of the War on Terror.



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## YEMEN'S FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

### DEFINITION OF TERRORISM

The fundamental and existential difficulty in coping with the contemporary phenomenon that we so easily in our daily language call terrorism was immediately brought into focus on September 11, 2001. It is impossible to find a universally satisfactory definition of terrorism, and the reasons for this are political rather than semantic. In the following paragraph, I will discuss a variety of definitions of terrorism from several different points of views. The Union of Moslem Worlds has submitted a definition of terrorism and requested the international organizations to adopt it. This definition reads: "Terrorism is the aggression practiced by individuals, groups or states oppressing human beings, religion, life, money and honor." The definition further includes all forms of banditry, intimidation, and violence whether committed by an individual or collective syndicate. It also includes environmental damage and destruction of public and/or private utilities."<sup>1</sup> All these actions are considered as "mischief in land which is prohibited by the Holy Quran. Terrorism, as defined by the FBI, is "The unlawful use of force against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population or any segment thereof, in the furtherance of political or social objectives."<sup>2</sup> This definition includes three elements:

- Terrorist activities are illegal and involve the use of force.
- The actions are intended to intimidate or coerce.
- The actions are committed in support of political or social objectives.

Even within the United States (U.S.) government, different departments and agencies use different definitions reflecting subtly different professional perspectives on the subject. A 1988 study "identified 109 definitions of terrorism that covered 22 different definitional elements. The current U.S. National Security Strategy defines terrorism as "Premeditated Politically motivated violence against innocents,"<sup>3</sup> and the Defense department officially defines terrorism as "the calculated use of unlawful violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological."<sup>4</sup>

After looking at the many different "official" definitions of terrorism, I would like to define terrorism from my point of view. I think terrorism is any act of aggression or violence against any human, society, nations, or religion from person(s), states, or governmental society that have no right to take such actions. I believe terrorism is used most often whether the terrorist agrees or disagrees with the use of violence to achieve their end goal. I believe there are very subtle differences between the acts of terrorism and legitimate military actions. For example, if a group is fighting to over throw their government and sent a suicide bomber to blow up a civilian



target, I would consider this to be a guerrilla act of terrorism. I also consider the attack on the USS Cole in the port of Aden in October 2000 as an act of guerrilla terrorism. The terrorist group sent a small boat filled with explosives to blow up a U.S. military vessel for no reason, although the Yemen Government allowed it to be there for a legitimate reason. If a country sent terrorist bombers to destroy the water system or other civilian infrastructure within another country with the express intent of causing harm to civilians, then I would consider this to be a state act of terrorism. In contrast, if such a group were struggling to end the occupation by a foreign power and sent a suicide bomber to blow up military positions, I would consider this to be a guerrilla military action. If a country sent military bombers to attack the military airfields of its enemy, then I believe this would be a state military action.

### **THE GLOBAL TERRORIST THREAT**

The U.S, Yemen, and the whole world have been affected by terrorist acts and are taking steps to deal with their serious impacts. Terrorism dominates a spectacular range of issues in the global media, educational institutions, and in world governments. The largest terrorist attack so far against the world happened in the U.S. on September 11, 2001 when 19 individuals commandeered four US commercial airplanes and turned them onto guided missiles, crashing two of them into the World Trade Center in New York, one into the Pentagon in Washington DC, and one into a field in Pennsylvania after the passengers tried to stop the hijackers. In one single day, the terrorists killed more than 3,000 people and caused more than \$ one billion in damages to the United States. These crimes were attacks against humanity and condemned around the world. A lot of other countries, including Yemen, have suffered through many terrorist attacks in recent decades causing much death and destruction. Many of these terrorist attacks varied in type and magnitude, beginning with individual attacks, and then escalating to car bombings, and gradually increasing in quantity and power of explosives. The Yemeni terrorists are now receiving foreign training in the building and implementation of remote control devices to carry out their attacks. They are targeting oil installations and vital economic interests that affect all the people within the targeted country. Listed below are several instances of important criminal and terrorist acts within the last decade that occurred in Yemen.

- January 16, 1997: A car bomb exploded in the province of Aden. Investigations and integrations revealed that the Nabill Nanakli, a Spanish nationality one of terrorist group, was responsible for the attack. It was reported that this group was heading up a terrorist network that planned to carry out assassination operations against senior

officials and leaders in the country, and perform acts of sabotage against public and foreign interests.

- July 2, 1998: An explosive took place in the village of Al-khadad the explosion killing seven people.
- December 9, 1998: A car bomb exploded in Al-askareya area.
- December 23, 1998: A ten-person group calling itself the Aden Abyan Islamic Army was arrested in the province of Aden for possessing a large quantity of explosive devices. The objective of this group was to destabilize the national security by kidnapping a group of tourists in the city of Moudia, located in the province of Abyan. The operation resulted in the killing of four tourists and the injury of two. All the members of this group were carrying British and French passports.
- October 12, 2000: AL-Qida attacked the USS Cole in the port of Aden. The operation resulted in the deaths of 17 American sailors and injury of 30 other people. The next day, October 13, 2000, a terrorist attack also took place in front of the British embassy in Sanaa.
- December 18, 2001: An unknown terrorist element ambushed a security group resulting in the deaths of 19 officers and soldiers and the injury of 28 people in Marib Govern Orate (Hasoon AL-galall)

Many have lived for centuries far from threat of terrorism except for certain sporadic instances in their contemporary history. During this same time period, Yemeni society has repeatedly suffered from terrorist acts, especially in recent years by misguided Islam its elements, which hold extremist concepts of our Islamic religion. These misguided elements carry out these attacks under the pretense of defending Islam against foreign influence. Since the establishment of the Republic of Yemen on May 22, 1990, and the adoption of democratic pluralism based on the principles of Shore, the Islamic principle of shared values and goals, the door was opened for all political parties and organizations with differing opinions and platforms to express themselves through the media without any ban being placed on them. The cost of those new freedoms makes it easier for religious fanatics to justify the use of violent terrorism. The Yemeni political leadership has always been determined to eliminate all motives and justifications for political violence, even during the harshest circumstances, which repeatedly occurred in Yemen during the last century, early in this century, and in The 1980s and 1990s. But we were surprised, since the terrorism of Abu Al-Hassan Al-Mehdar in 1998 he was sent by Abu Hamzah Al-Masray who was living in Britain and the subsequent terrorist and violent accidents, that the Republic of Yemen has become a target for terrorist groups without any clear

justification despite the climate of full political freedom to form parties and publish articles in the papers expressing a difference of opinions. This is what has made the terror phenomenon in Yemen such an alien and denounced phenomenon, as it does not have any justifications other than the shortsighted and wrong understanding of the Islamic religion. these groups are absent of the correct vision of the noble Islamic Shari's goals and their actions are based on dark and closed minds emanating from blind spitefulness against every thing.

#### **YEMEN'S STRATEGIC REQUIREMENTS TO FIGHT TERRORISM**

The republic of Yemen is a member of the international community and United Nations (UN). Like other member state of the UN, the republic of Yemen is responsible for respecting and implementing the decrees of the UN and all its affiliated agencies. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 created a new reality in international relations. They made the issue of terrorism a top priority issue for the international community that must finally be confronted as a serious threat to all the states and people of the world. In recognition of this serious threat, the UN Security Council passed resolution number 1371 on September 28, 2001 urging all state to cooperate together in stopping all terrorist acts against other world countries. It also urges UN members to cooperate further in the full implementation of the international agreements on terror. Under Article 3, Paragraph C of this resolution, the council called for all members to cooperate through multilateral arrangements and agreements, in order to prevent and suppress terrorist attacks, and take measures against the perpetrators of such acts. Like other Arab states, Yemen is determined to implement the resolutions and agreements, which other Arab governments have approved in the area of fighting terrorism. These resolutions and agreements are:

- Resolution No 257 incorporated in the code of the member states of the Arab Interior Ministers' Council, which was approved by the Council in Tunis in 1996.
- The Arab strategy on combating terrorism approved in Tunis 1997.
- The Arab Anti Terrorism Agreement issued by the Arab Interior and Justice Ministers Councils in Cairo in April 1998.

Therefore, in accordance with Article 6 of the Yemeni's constitution ), the Yemeni security authorities' action in pursuing terrorist elements is one of the steps Yemen has taken toward fulfilling their obligations and pledges for combating terrorism. Article 6 affirms government commitment to implement the UN's charter and rules of international law. The preservation of national sovereignty, the building of the homeland, and the confrontation of any encroachment or attack on its sovereignty do not allow outbidding, claim or denial.”<sup>5</sup>

The government exhausted all means and measures to convince the outlawed terrorist groups to surrender themselves and face a fair trial, but they refused and continued their terrorist acts. This prompted the government to start hunting for these terrorist groups and the Yemen security apparatus had to move in order to foil any new threats from the aforesaid terrorist groups before they actually became a direct threat to the lives and safety of the Yemeni citizens. These actions were pursuant to the police authority law number 15 of the Year 2000, and the Prime Minister's decree number 35 of the Year 2002 ratifying the police authority law number 15.

The pursuit of terrorist groups within Yemen took place with the full cooperation and coordination between the Yemeni and U.S. government. There is nothing in the Yemeni constitution or law that prevents the Yemen government from working with other foreign governments to provide assistance in different fields, including the security field, where Yemen has limited resources. Yemen is in need of such expertise and will greatly benefit from other states' capabilities and expertise. Moreover, the cooperation between the military and security organs in Yemen, and their American counterparts in the field of combating terrorism falls within the implementation of the UN resolutions and does not conflict with the principles of national sovereignty. This is a major concern for the Yemeni people; that the government is taking such actions on the basis of protecting the supreme national interests of the country and to avert any potential incident that could have serious results and consequences against Yemen citizens.

#### **THE YEMEN AND UNITED STATES RELATIONSHIP TO FIGHT TERRORISM**

The Yemeni political leadership has launched an initiative to confront and fight terror, and work towards ending it at the earliest opportunity. It also announced willingness for cooperation within the framework of international efforts to fight terrorism along with other allied countries that have the same stated objective. One of these countries was the U.S. Moreover, the President of Yemen Ali Abdullah Salih, took the initiative to visit Washington and meet with President Bush. In November 25-27 2001 President Salih provided President Bush an accurate assessment of the security situation in Yemen, outlined the efforts the Yemeni government has undertaken to fight terrorism, and clarify the existing cooperation agreements between the Yemeni and U.S. security services. President Salih also reiterated that Yemen is working with the international community, and in particular the U.S., towards fighting terrorism. The Yemeni government established the Yemeni Special Forces (SP) in 1999 to fight and eliminate terrorism within its borders. Terrorism poses a threat to the country's security and stability, as well as harms its national and international interests. Yemen and the U.S. have made tremendous

progress in tracking and apprehending al-Qaeda presence in both countries, such as the discovery and subsequent killing of Abu Ali AL Hartley, one of the most dangerous operatives in al-Qaeda, and his cell on November 3, 2002. Most of the terrorists captured in Yemen in 2003 belong to the al-Qaeda network.

A state of war has long existed between Palestine and Israel. It began after the Balfour Declaration when British Secretary of State Balfour pledged British support for a Jewish national home in Palestine in 1917. Following his pledge of support, allied forces under British General Allenby occupied Palestine in September 1918. When the Zionist immigrants began migrating to Palestine, the British and French continued supporting them throughout and following 1948. In 1956, when Israel attacked Egypt, they acquired land in Egypt. Later, in 1967, the Israeli-Arab conflict resulted in Israel occupying more of the Arab land. After this conflict Israel became a strong military force in the Middle East. In 1973, the Egyptians and Syrians declared war against Israel to drive Israel from their occupied land. Militarily they succeeded, in some initial attacks, but the U.S supported Israel. contributing to the Arabs, strategically lost The war. Ongoing political support from the U.S. has resulted in Israel being able to produce weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and a slow eradication of the Palestinian people. This is a hypocritical policy of the U.S. because the production of WMD is forbidden for all other Arab countries. The main disagreement between Yemen and U.S. is why has the U.S. resolved to go to war with Iraq at this time over it possibly having WMD, but allows Israel to have them? There is no logical justification for the U.S. to go to war with Iraq. I think Iraq is not a terrorist state, nor does it harbor terrorists. I do agree that the Iraqi government That was heeded by Saddam Hussein as not good and not treat the people justly and needed to be changed but a different way to do that should have been found this way the whole country was destroyed a lot of people were killed and most of the Iraqi people are now with out job and security many countries of the world agree that any US strike on Iraq is a brutal act and is in violation of the sovereignty of UN member countries. Many Arab people believe that the reasons for the U.S. attacking Iraq were:

- To consolidate the status of Israel as a strong regional power.
- That a massive operation against Iraq will shake the stability of many countries in the region and further weaken Arab countries. These actions, in turn, will enable Israel to have a bigger chance to settle its conflict with Arabs based on Prime Minister Sharon's terms.
- The evidence is that, the US does not do any retaliation against Israel even though it has occupied and is killing Palestinians every day.

Because of these reasons, Yemen does not consider any action against Israel Government as an act of terrorism. Furthermore, even though Israel has occupied Arab land, the U.S. did not consider the Israelis to be terrorists. The Palestinians are struggling to liberate their homeland from a foreign power that has no justifiable right for being there and occupying it. but I believe that if Israel withdrew from the land it occupied. and Palestine becomes state then any action against Israel will consider as terrorist action and all the Arabs country will fight against that action.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- I think it is time for the whole world to focus on and build powerful coalitions necessary to condemn and counter terrorism. This is not because it is directed against any specific country or person, but because it threatens all humanity and the religions, and is directed against the whole world. Combating terrorism requires using all tools available from the whole world, because no one can do the job by it self. For these tools to successfully do the job, people must cooperate and wisely use them together in a coordinated manner to achieve positive results.
- The United States should work to solve the Arab-Israeli dispute because I think the US is the only country eligible to do that.
- The United State needs to strike a balance concerning national issues and the whole world should support the U.S. in countering terrorism and seriously dealing with terrorists and take the appropriate action towards them.
- The Yemen Minister of Defense should approve the following new counter-terrorism policies for the Yemen Government in order to better combat internal terrorism.
  - Informational
    - Conducting more dialogues and awareness with misled youths through learned Ulamas, who are fully aware of their responsibility and missions to enlighten these youths about their religious and worldly affairs and guide them to the right path.
    - Conducting more dialogues and awareness in schools, mosques, institutes and universities to combat this phenomenon through their religious curriculum. The role of the media to educate society and help it confront and eliminate terrorism and assigning a role for the political parties and the national forces to Combat terrorism.

- Renouncing and confronting violence in a clear and open manner by political parties and organizations
- Clear commitment to hand over any of the elements wanted by justice. It must be emphasized that anyone who harbors or protects those elements is declaring war against the interests of his homeland. Such acts will put the government in a position whereby it is forced to expose those who encourage terrorism or harbor terrorists in case they repeat such activities
- Security
  - Increase the strength of the military with improved weaponry and enhance the soldier's training. And. Increase the Special Forces in the possible terrorism areas (Marib, Aljouf, Sada, Shabwa, Abyan, and the Hadhramout.
  - The government should take necessary measures against the terrorism according to the effective laws.
  - Continue combating terrorism in cooperation with US and neighboring countries
  - Maintain a good relationship with neighboring countries.
  - Enhance the relationship with United States.
- Economy
  - Improve the economy of Yemen
  - Improve communications between cultures/nations regarding the resources available in Yemen

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Mohamed E. Al-Haji, *Yemeni Ulama's Statement on the Terrorism Phenomenon*; (Yemen 26<sup>th</sup> September Publications January 2003), 94.

<sup>2</sup> George W. Bush, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.; The White House, February 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Record, *Bounding the War on Terrorism*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, December 2003), 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>5</sup> AbdulKader Bajjammal, *Facts for the People: Terror in Yemen: Where to?* (Yemen: 26<sup>th</sup> September Publications, December 2002), 75.





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